



Summer Outlook 2001

It's that time of the year when everyone wants to know how the summer tourism season is shaping up. "Each year has its challenges and 2001 is no different," says Travel Montana Director, Matthew Cohn. "The challenges we face this year include higher gasoline prices, a slowing economy and the potential for wildfires." Cohn says based on our experiences from last year's wildfires, Travel Montana will be ready to implement the necessary procedures to inform the public about fires if the situation warrants it.

Although it is too early to predict if these challenges will affect visitation, Cohn is cautiously optimistic that the summer tourism season will be steady. "Overall what we are hearing throughout the state is tourism inquiries look good. Hotel and airline bookings are favorable. Our national parks, the 125th anniversary of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the Lewis and Clark Trail and the diverse range of attractions found throughout the state will continue to lure visitors to Montana.

Visitmt.com Online with Our Visitors

It is said that change is good and that is something Travel Montana's web staff takes seriously. Our webmasters are constantly updating, improving and implementing the latest technology to keep up with consumer demand.

Our successful "Invite a Friend" program can now be accessed online. Visitors can choose to send a friend a personalized electronic postcard from Governor Judy Martz that contains helpful vacation planning links found on visitmt.com or users can opt to send a free Montana vacation kit with a personalized letter of invitation from Governor Martz by mail. Another new feature includes the distribution of a free e-mail newsletter to a list of interested subscribers. The quarterly newsletter highlights the latest web features and the most up-to-date information on all of the events and activities that are taking place in the state. Anyone interested in the newsletter can sign up online.

The popularity of the website continues to grow. Ninety percent of the inquiries for Montana travel information are now being accessed through the Internet. From January

through April, 2001, visitmt.com hosted 613,771 visitors. This is compared to 473,416 users for the same time period in 2000. Last year the site hosted a record 1.5 million users; this year the site expects 2 million visitors.

Making Contact

Travel Montana's Overseas Marketing Manager, Pam Gosink, recently attended Pow Wow in Orlando, Florida. This event, sponsored by the Travel Association Industry of America, is the largest U.S. marketplace for international tour operators and journalists. Pam reports that the show was a success and she met with 46 tour operators in key European markets as well as the Scandinavian countries, Japan and Taiwan. Jan Ek with Glacier Park, Inc. and Linda Anderson from Glacier Country joined Pam in the booth. Leads are available at travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/OverseasMarketing.htm. Contact Pam at pam@visitmt.com or 406-444-4384 to access the leads.

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS TIIP Grants

Application packets for the 2001 Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (TIIP) grants are now available from Travel Montana. The amount of grant funding available for tourism-related "brick and mortar" projects will be announced later in June, but should be between \$150,000 to \$200,000.

The application packet includes TIIP guidelines, answers to frequently asked TIIP questions, a 2001 TIIP Grant Application form and a copy of Montana's 1998-2002 Strategic Plan for Travel and Tourism. Everything except the strategic plan can be downloaded

Did You Know?

- We are distributing the "Update" electronically. To receive this monthly newsletter online you may sign up on our Intranet site www.travelmontana.state.mt.us.
- Shirley Beck and Dale Siegford, owners of the Sweet Palace, The Sapphire Gallery and Rolling Oranges in Philipsburg, received the U.S. Small Business Administration's Montana Small Business Persons of the Year Award.
- Bohart Ranch Cross Country Center will host the U.S. Cross Country Skiing Championships January 3-13, 2002. The U.S. Olympic team will be announced following these races.
- *WildBird* magazine named Great Falls as one of its top 15 family birding and vacation destinations.
- *Western Living* magazine voted Glacier National Park as the top family vacation spot and the Canyon Wedding Chapel in Red Lodge as one of the top best wedding spots.
- The Montana Arts Council received a five-year \$500,000 grant from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds to serve as a national model to help build arts participation in Montana.
- The Forest Service has approved a 377-acre expansion at Discovery Basin ski area.
- Pompeys Pillar opened to the public for the first time as a National Monument on May 26, 2001.

from Travel Montana's Intranet site - go to the forms and application section of the travelmontana.state.mt.us/newsandupdates page. Printed copies of the strategic plan and the full application packet are available by contacting Travel Montana, 406-444-2654, fax 406-444-1800, or e-mail: victor@visitmt.com. Completed applications are due in Travel Montana's offices by 5 p.m., August 1, 2001.



Over 50 members of the Northwest Outdoor Writer's Association gathered in the Flathead Valley for their annual conference May 4-6. NOWA members include magazine and newspaper writers, book authors, editors, photographers and broadcasters specializing in outdoor journalism. Travel Montana's Publicity Coordinator Mary Boyle and Staff Photographer Donnie Sexton pitched statewide story ideas and photographic opportunities to this enthusiastic group. Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Diane Tipton was also on hand to get the word out about FWP's programs. The Flathead Convention and Visitors Bureau hosted the three-day event and organized pre and post tours that touted the area's outdoor recreation.

2001 Community Tourism Assessment Program

Montana communities interested in assessing their tourism potential and identifying feasible projects that can strengthen the role

of tourism in their area are invited to apply for the 2001/2002 session of the Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP).

For the first time since the program began in 1993, Montana's larger cities are being invited to apply. For the 2001/2002 session, at least one urban community, i.e. larger than 15,000 population, will be selected to participate as a pilot project. Montana's rural communities will have two program positions reserved for them. The final mix of urban and rural communities will depend on the number of applications.

CTAP is an eight-month "self help" program offered to Montana communities by MSU Extension, Travel Montana and the University of Montana's Travel Research Program. Local community action committees use the process and its facilitation services to analyze local resident attitudes about and interest in tourism, their community's tourism potential, gaps in visitor services, and the identification of affordable projects or actions that could strengthen the role of tourism in the local economy.

CTAP applications are available by calling Travel Montana, 406-444-2654, or by downloading the forms and guidelines from Travel Montana's Intranet site: travelmontana.state.mt.us/newsandupdates page. Completed applications are due in Travel Montana's offices by 5 p.m. August 1, 2001. Participating communities will be selected by the middle of August and the first CTAP meeting will be held in September 2001. For more information, contact Travel Montana's Victor Bjornberg, 406-444-4366, e-mail: victor@visitmt.com.

Book It

Do you want to get your lodging property online with your online guests? It's easy. Through an agreement with Travel Montana and the Montana Innkeepers Association (MIKA), Montana lodging properties can offer consumers the opportunity to book their reservations online via a direct link through Travel Montana's website to WorldRes.com. WorldRes.com. is one of the largest online reservation services in the world. According to Stuart Doggett, the Executive Director of MIKA, since the program's inception in February 2000, over 200 Montana properties have signed up. As of March, over 2,000 rooms were booked through WorldRes.com. All lodging properties are invited to enroll. There are no up-front costs to participate in this project; the only thing that is necessary is Internet access. For more information log onto www.worldres.com or call 888-973-7303.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

June

- 14-19 History and Hospitality in Southeast Montana Fam Tour Custer Country
- 16-21 Wedding Fam Tour, Yellowstone Country
- 27-28 Affordable Meetings West, San Jose, CA

July

- 11-16 Waterways Through Glacier Country Fam Tour

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to Travel Montana's Intranet site: travelmontana.state.mt.us.



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